

modesta, and I do not doubt that its affinities are with these and other members of the somewhat complicated group it is classed with; but in its habits it is a little *Homorus*, and unlike a *Synallaxis*. Being a little feeble bird, it does not live at the roots of trees and large bushes, but is found under diminutive scrubby plants in open arid situations. About the roots of these wiry little bushes, 12 to 18 inches high, the bird searches for small insects, and when disturbed has a feeble jerky flight, which carries it to a distance of ten or twenty yards. It is, however, very difficult to make it rise; for when approached it runs swiftly away, leaving one in doubt as to whether he has seen a mouse or a bird darting across the naked spaces between the shrubs. Probably it has acquired these habits in the desolate situations it frequents: anyhow, I am so convinced of the variable character of habits in general, that I am very far from imagining that the resemblance of this species to *Homorus* points to community of descent; on the contrary, I believe that it is entirely accidental.

XXVIII.—*On the Coloration in Life of the naked Skin-tracts on the Head of Geococcyx californicus.* By Dr. R. W. SHUFELDT, U.S. Army, Memb. of the Am. Ornith. Union, &c.

(Plate VII.)

THE latest authoritative work that has appeared upon North-American Ornithology, the second edition of Professor Elliott Coues's 'Key to North-American Birds,' presents us, it seems to me, with a very inadequate description of the extent of the naked skin-tracts about the eye and on the head of *Geococcyx*, or even their coloration in life. This author simply tells us that there is "a naked area around the eye," and that this "bare space around the eye [is] bluish and orange." So far as I am aware, no other ornithological work gives us any better description than the 'Key.' Now the true condition of the tracts in question is so far different

from this that I feel justified in making an accurate drawing of the head of a fine specimen of the Ground-Cuckoo, presumably a male, which was presented me in the flesh a few days ago. This drawing I here present to my ornithological friends who may not have been so fortunate as to have had the opportunity of examining *Geococcyx* as I had, and observing the interesting state of affairs which I will now describe.

The hindmost feathers which go towards the formation of the crest of this Cuckoo are of a deep prussian blue colour, quite black in some lights, being untipped by bright ochre, as the anterior ones are. Just behind the crest proper occur the ochre-and-white-tipped feathers that are the continuation of the feather-tracts that pass over the eye. Below these, again, we find a *median* tract of feathers, a little more than a centimetre long and only five millimetres wide, extending down towards the nuchal region. On either side of this latter tract, overlying the *parietal* region of the skull, we discover a naked-skin area, about three fourths the size of a shilling, and of a deep, though very bright, orange-colour. These orange-coloured spaces are really on the back of the head, being simply separated from each other by the aforesaid narrow median line of feathers. When the bird becomes excited and elevates its crest and the feathers behind the head, then upon lateral view this orange space will show as I have depicted it in my drawing. Its rounded posterior outline is the same as the outline of the smooth posterior surface of the skull, as already stated, it being its sole covering in this region. In life the eye of *Geococcyx* is entirely surrounded by a naked area of skin, which both above and anteriorly is coloured a deep prussian-blue tint. Beneath the eye this gradually passes into a pale bluish white, almost quite white in some lights. The naked space behind the eye is the most extensive of all. Posteriorly this merges into the orange of the parietal skin-tract described above, while anteriorly it blends with the other colour just mentioned. It is divided into three fairly distinct horizontal bands of colour, the upper and lower being dark prussian

blue, the middle one a bluish white of a similar shade to that described as tinting the skin beneath the eye.

These colours, especially the brilliant orange, must be quite striking in the living bird; and it is easy for us to imagine that they may "change colour" with the mood of their possessor, blushing much in the same manner as the head of the Turkey cock is wont to do under certain circumstances.

Fort Wingate, New Mexico,
April 13th, 1885.

XXIX.—*Descriptions of three new Species of Birds from South America.* By HANS VON BERLEPSCH.

1. *CHLOROSPINGUS REYI*, sp. nov.

Ch. superciliari (Lafr.) proximus, sed superciliis albis nullis et pileo toto usque ad nucliam cinereo, colore dorsi olivaceo lætiore et colore subtus intensius flavo primo visu distinguendus. Long. al. $67\frac{1}{2}$, rostr. culm. $11\frac{1}{2}$, tars. $21\frac{1}{2}$ mm.

Habitat. Mérida, Venezuela (typ. in Mus. H. v. B.).

To Dr. E. Rey, of Leipzig, who has furnished me with a large and interesting collection of bird-skins received by him direct from a collector residing at Mérida, Venezuela, this new species is dedicated. Unfortunately, the single specimen of *Ch. reyi* contained in that collection is not in good condition, and the tail is wanting. Nevertheless, there can be not the slightest doubt that it belongs to a *Chlorospingus* which is new to science. Its nearest ally may be *Ch. superciliaris* (Lafr.); but at first sight it differs from that species in altogether wanting the white superciliary stripe and the white feathers under the eye, always to be seen in true *Ch. superciliaris*: In the latter species the cinereous colour is confined to the front, while in *Ch. reyi* it covers the whole of the pileus, coming down as far as the nape. The lores are also grey. On the upper edge of the eye there commences a broad olivaceous stripe which borders the cinereous cap and further involves the upper edge of the auriculars, then



D^r R. W. Shufeldt U.S.A. del. et Pinx.
T. Smith lith.

GEOCOCCYX CALIFORNIANUS ♂

Hartnart imp.